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ABSTRACT

As older adult organizations stretch to meet the needs of a growing older adult client population, these Senior Citizen Centers, clubs and other programs are increasingly unable to understand and control their internal as well as external environments. Organizational Development, a body of applied behavioral science techniques, can help older adult organizations become more effective by providing ways of building shared understanding of strengths as well as limitations. Because of the high cost of traditional organizations development programs, the community college is depicted as an indirect provider of the services to older adult organizations. By training voluntary community resources to deliver organizational development services, by integrating this effort into other community programs, community colleges can draw upon their own valuable, specialized competence to serve the older adults of our communities. Moreover, by developing this indirect role, it is asserted that community colleges can pursue a direction consistent with their desire to serve older adult agencies without diverting college resources which may be vital to other worthwhile programs. A model for the delivery of organizational development services through community colleges is described. (Author)

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A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A COORDINATOR OF A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS

A Paper Presented At The Annual Convention Of The American Association Of Community And Junior Colleges

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A COORDINATOR OF A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS

As older adult organizations stretch to meet the needs of a growing older adult client population, these Senior Citizen Centers, clubs and other programs are increasingly unable to understand and control their internal as well as external environments. Organizational Development, a body of applied behaviorial science techniques, can help older adult organizations become more effective by providing ways of building shared understanding of strengths as well as limitations.

Because of the high cost of traditional organizational development programs, the community college is depicted as an indirect provider of the services to older adult organizations. By training voluntary community resources to deliver organizational development services, by integrating this effort into other community programs, community colleges can draw upon their own valuable, specialized competence to serve the older adults of our communities. Moreover, by developing this indirect role, it is asserted that community colleges can pursue a direction consistent with their desire to serve older adult agencies without diverting college resources which may be vital to other worthwhile programs. A model for the delivery of organizational development services through community colleges is described.

PROBLEM UNIVERSE: RAPID GROWTH OF OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS.

The rapid growth of older adult organizations in the United States has been a direct response to the accelerating growth of our older adult population coupled with the increasing inability of family and public resources to provide for the physiological, so ial and psychological needs of this older adult population. Senior citizens centers, clubs and volunteer organizations appear to be responding to a variety of unsatisfied needs on the part of the older population and are growing at a rate even exceeding that of the actual older adult population.

New York State and its Niagara County may be representative of this rapid older adult organization growth. While the population aged 65 and older has grown by 16.2% from 1960 to 1970 in New York State, membership in the Lockport Senior Citizens Centre, Lockport, New York, for example, has grown from 1,140 in 1970 to 2,600 in 1974, a 128% increase. Even more spectacularly, the Niagara County Retired Senior Volunteer Program experienced a 55% increase in the number of active volunteers in its third year alone. At the same time that older adult organizations have experienced rapid growth in their attempts to meet some of the needs of our older population, they have also found themselves propelled into a vastly complex organizational world.

Older adult organizations are facing an increasingly complex world-an environment characterized by a multitude of pressures from a variety of sources demanding the provision of difficult services.

As the variety of program offerings increase in response to these client needs, older adult organizations also find themselves confronted by increasing and often conflicting demands from boards, professional staff as well as various funding agencies. Without the internal capacity to rationalize environmental pressures by developing clear operational goals and committment to achieve them older adult organizations tend to suboptimize their service delivery potential.

The case of the Lockport Senior Citizens Centre's sources of funding may serve to describe just part of the complex environment faced by older adult organizations. The Lockport Senior Citizens Centre receives funds from a local municipality, an area United Way, a county-wide mental health organization and a federally sponsored program. While each funding source requires its own budget, only two of these agencies have the same fiscal year. As older adult organizations stretch to meet client needs, then, the world with which older adult organizations are required to deal becomes increasingly complex.

PROBLEM CONTEXT: THE INABILITY OF OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS TO DEAL WITH THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

As the world about older adult organizations becomes more and more complex, we find that older adult organizations are increasingly unable to effectively come to grips with that world. The growth of the older adult organizations themselves has proceeded without the benefit of adequate planning. Organizational diagnosis, con-

flict resolution and teambuilding skills, for example, are not characteristic qualities of the leadership of these older adult agencies. Inappropriate organizational structures frustrate the sharing of needed information. Poorly designed jobs within older adult organizations may result in alienation rather than productivity among staff members. Organizational goals and priorities are not articulated, they just sort of happen. In short, most older adult organizations are unable to deal effectively with their external world because they lack the internal organizational capacity to do so.

Without developing an internal capacity to improve organizational effectiveness, older adult organizations will continue to limit their ability to deliver services to their client populations. Without this internal capacity, older adult organizations cannot hope to develop community awareness and support for older adult programs. Without this internal capacity, our communities and our older adults may be paying a much higher price in resources and lost opportunities than they might otherwise be required to pay.

PROBLEM ISSUE: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF BUILDING INTERNAL CAPACITY WITHIN OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS.

Organizational development approaches offer older adult agencies a means by which these organizations can develop the wherewithal to improve their effectiveness. Supported by a 1974-75 National Model Grant from the Administration On Aging,

U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, we at Niagara County Community College have found that organizational development, as described below, delivered to older adult organizations does make a substantial contribution to the improvement of their effectiveness. Some of our objectives, consistent with organizational development theory, in the first year of this program included:

1) Encourage a re-examination of past practices and current organizational problems.
2) Help to construct those means by which important information about organizational strengths and weaknesses can be shared.
3) Help incumbents in the organization to develop a keener ability to construct and test innovative solutions for organizational problems.

As an organization becomes more explicitly aware of its systems of authority and communication, of its problem-solving capabilities, and of the needs of its members, it can, with some coaching, improve its problem-solving capacity. Problem-solving capacity, as used here refers to the entire spectrum of organizational tasks from conflict resolution to long-range goal setting.

While organizational development offers a vital means by which older adult organizations can be improved, it ought to be clearly understood that the successful process of organizational

development for any one organization is a long term effort which usually requires considerable expenditure of resources. Our experience with our first year's grant confirms the notion that there are no generalizable solutions for the uniquely specific problems confronting particular organizations. There are no real short cuts available as we help an organization work through its own particular problems. In view of the costs involved in using skilled consulting resources as well as older adult organizations staff time, it may appear that a substantial organizational development program is probably beyond the reach of nearly all older adult agencies.

However, as the 1974-75 Organizational Development Grant proceeded, we found both within the Community College as well as within the larger community itself a body of underused resources which, with some specialized training and coaching, could accept a substantial role in the provision of organizational development consulting services. If, as proposed below, volunteer, donated or low cost community resources can be converted into paraprofessional organizational development consultants, then older adult organizations might not have to face the prohibitive costs of a traditional organizational development program, and, yet, still receive the benefits of an individually designed program of organizational improvment. Community Colleges, because of their permanence, location, focus, and mandate, offer an attractive setting for the training and coordination required for a community-based organi-

zational development program for older adult agencies.

THE MODEL: THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A COORDINATOR OF A COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULT ORGANIZATIONS.

In order that organizational development services might be made available, on a long-term basis, to the largest number of older adult organizations, the following is a proposed model based substantially upon our first year's efforts by which community colleges might serve as the facilitators of a community-based organizational development program for older adult agencies.

1) Management of the Model

It is proposed that the model be managed under a Division of Continuing Education within the community college and that this division or department provide guidance, support and integrative functions for this project and other Continuing Education programs within the college. It is suggested that an advisory board composed of members of the community college faculty and staff, representatives from local industries, as well as older adult organizations be created. This advisory board would have the role of identification of prospective clients, servicing of particular needs with regard to older adult organizations and the integration of this project with other community programs.

2) Community College Resource Identification.

With the assistance of various academic departmental chairmen and other college officers, faculty members who might serve in training as well as trainee roles within such an organizational development program should be identified. Faculty resumes and course offerings in the social and management sciences particularly should be collected and evaluated.

With the assistance of participating instructors, students who have demonstrated the potential to be trained in organizational development skills should be identified. These students should be interviewed and a select group invited to participate in the program as members of Organizational Development Delivery Teams. Participation in the project might serve as partial fulfillment of certain course requirements and thereby allow students to earn credit for participation in this program.

3) Larger Community Resource Identification.

In addition to faculty and students from the community college, active and retired managers, university faculty and graduate students as well as others in the larger community should be surveyed and asked to participate as either members of Organizational Development Delivery Teams or the Organizational Development Training Group.

In this model the small Organizational Development Delivery Teams should be created, trained and coordinated to provide older adult organizations with organizational development consulting services. Individuals possessing some operational organizational skills from the community college as well as larger community should form the membership of these teams. Similarly, specialized community resources such as organizational development consultants, social planning specialists and social service practitioners should be organized into Organizational Development Training Groups to train the individual members of the organizational development teams.

4) Orientation For Organizational Development Training Group. With the assistance of an organizational development consultant, the Organizational Development Training Group should participate in several training sessions to familiarize themselves with the orientation and content of the program prior to the training of the various Organizational Development Delivery Teams. This Organizational Development Training Group should have the services of a professional Organizational Development consultant available on a continuing basis to provide needed back-up.

5) Organizational Development Delivery Team Training. Once the members of the Organizational Development Training

Group have been identified and provided with an orientation program, they will then begin to train, to build a cadre of community resources to aid older adult organizations. By means of supervised practice opportunities, the Organizational Development Training Group will teach consulting skills to Delivery Team members. Organizational diagnosis, intervention techniques and help-giving skills will be stressed.

6) Program Delivery.

This portion deals with the delivery of Organizational Development services to older adult organizations by the individual Organizational Development Delivery Teams. As a result of this phase of the model, it is hoped that older adult organizations can increase their organizational ability to plan and manage programs and activities based on their full awareness of member needs and interests, member and community resources and the current state of knowledge and practice concerning older adult programming. It is hoped that the Organizational Development Delivery Teams will be able to help the older adult organizations create opportunities for contribution and sense of self-worth on the part of the older adult members of these organizations.

As described in the model above, a community college is seen

as an indirect provider of organizational development services to older adult organizations. Organizational development appears to be a useful service which can be delivered through a community college to older adult agencies. Yet organizational development is not the only service which can be delivered to our community with the assistance of our community colleges. By using this model to help community resources develop other skills, other kinds of service programs can be brought to other kinds of organizations. By using this model, community colleges can forge that link between education and community service which is so vitally needed. Moreover, by developing the capacity of community colleges to identify, train and coordinate the delivery of community-based services, community colleges are more firmly establishing their places as useful members of their communities.

The Administration On Aging appears, through its continuing interest in and support of our project, to agree that community colleges do have roles to play in the delivery of help-giving services to older adult organizations. We are pleased to be able to demonstrate that community colleges can be of real assistance in carrying out national policy objectives with regard to older adult organizations. Yet, we would be even more pleased to announce to you next year that community colleges can, by using a model like the one described here, address community needs in ways both consistent with their desires to serve yet without diverting such large amounts of college resources that other worthwhile programs may not be undertaken.